

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

MARK WEISS,

Plaintiff,

- against -

VICE MEDIA LLC

Defendant.

Docket No. 1:18-cv-66

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Mark Weiss (“Weiss” or “Plaintiff”) by and through his undersigned counsel, as and for his Complaint against Defendant Vice Media LLC (“Vice” or “Defendant”) hereby alleges as follows:

NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This is an action for copyright infringement under Section 501 of the Copyright Act and for the removal and/or alteration of copyright management information under Section 1202(b) of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. This action arises out of Defendant’s unauthorized reproduction and public display of a copyrighted photograph of American heavy metal band Metallica, owned and registered by Weiss, a professional music photographer. Accordingly, Weiss seeks monetary relief under the Copyright Act of the United States, as amended, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

2. This claim arises under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. § 101 *et seq.*, and this Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a).

3. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant resides in and/or transacts business in New York.

4. Venue is proper in this District pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b).

PARTIES

5. Weiss is a professional music photographer in the business of licensing his photographs to online and print media for a fee having a usual place of business at 621 Locust Point Road, Rumson, New Jersey 07760.

6. Upon information and belief, Vice is a foreign limited liability company duly organized and existing under the laws of the State of Delaware, with a place of business at 49 South 2nd Street, Brooklyn, New York 11211. Upon information and belief, Vice is registered with the New York Department of State, Division of Corporations to do business in the State of New York. At all times material, hereto, Vice has owned and operated a website at the URL: www.Noisey.Vice.com (the “Website”).

STATEMENT OF FACTS

A. Background and Plaintiff’s Ownership of the Photograph

7. Weiss photographed American heavy metal band Metallica (the “Photograph”). A true and correct copy of the Photograph is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

8. Weiss is the author of the Photograph and has at all times been the sole owner of all right, title and interest in and to the Photograph, including the copyright thereto.

9. The Photograph was registered with the United States Copyright Office and was given registration number VA 2-078-864.

B. Defendant’s Infringing Activities

10. Vice ran an article on the Website entitled *Metallica Are Releasing a Deluxe Reissue of 'Master of Puppets'*. See https://noisey.vice.com/en_au/article/433p3m/metallica-are-releasing-a-deluxe-reissue-of-master-of-puppets. The article prominently featured the Photograph. A screen shot of the article is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

11. Vice did not license the Photograph from Plaintiff for its article, nor did Vice have Plaintiff's permission or consent to publish the Photograph on its Website.

FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF
(COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AGAINST VICE)
(17 U.S.C. §§ 106, 501)

12. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-11 above.

13. Vice infringed Plaintiff's copyright in the Photograph by reproducing and publicly displaying the Photograph on the Website. Vice is not, and has never been, licensed or otherwise authorized to reproduce, publically display, distribute and/or use the Photograph.

14. The acts of Defendant complained of herein constitute infringement of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright in violation of Sections 106 and 501 of the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 106 and 501.

15. Upon information and belief, the foregoing acts of infringement by Vice have been willful, intentional, and purposeful, in disregard of and indifference to Plaintiff's rights.

16. As a direct and proximate cause of the infringement by the Defendant of Plaintiff's copyright and exclusive rights under copyright, Plaintiff is entitled to damages and Defendant's profits pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 504(b) for the infringement.

SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF
INTEGRITY OF COPYRIGHT MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AGAINST VICE
(17 U.S.C. § 1202)

17. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each and every allegation contained in Paragraphs 1-16 above.

18. Upon information and belief, in its article on the Website, Vice intentionally and knowingly removed copyright management information identifying Plaintiff as the photographer of the Photograph.

19. The conduct of Vice violates 17 U.S.C. § 1202(b).

20. Upon information and belief, Vice falsification, removal and/or alteration of the aforementioned copyright management information was made without the knowledge or consent of Plaintiff.

21. Upon information and belief, the falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information was made by Vice intentionally, knowingly and with the intent to induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph. Vice also knew, or should have known, that such falsification, alteration and/or removal of said copyright management information would induce, enable, facilitate, or conceal their infringement of Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph.

22. As a result of the wrongful conduct of Vice as alleged herein, Plaintiff is entitled to recover from Vice the damages, that he sustained and will sustain, and any gains, profits and advantages obtained by Vice because of their violations of 17 U.S.C. § 1202, including attorney's fees and costs.

23. Alternatively, Plaintiff may elect to recover from Vice statutory damages pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c) (3) in a sum of at least \$2,500 up to \$25,000 for each violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully requests judgment as follows:

1. That Defendant Vice be adjudged to have infringed upon Plaintiff's copyrights in the Photograph in violation of 17 U.S.C §§ 106 and 501;
2. The Defendant Vice be adjudged to have falsified, removed and/or altered copyright management information in violation of 17 U.S.C. § 1202.
3. Plaintiff be awarded Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's infringement of Plaintiff's Photograph;
4. That, with regard to the Second Claim for Relief, Plaintiff be awarded either:
 - a) Plaintiff's actual damages and Defendant's profits, gains or advantages of any kind attributable to Defendant's falsification, removal and/or alteration of copyright management information; or b) alternatively, statutory damages of at least \$2,500 and up to \$ 25,000 for each instance of false copyright management information and/or removal or alteration of copyright management information committed by Defendant pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(c);
5. That Defendant be required to account for all profits, income, receipts, or other benefits derived by Defendant as a result of its unlawful conduct;
6. That Plaintiff be awarded his costs, expenses and attorneys' fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 1203(b);
7. That Plaintiff be awarded pre-judgment interest; and
8. Such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper.

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable in accordance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 38(b).

Dated: Valley Stream, New York
January 4, 2018

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